

# Jurnal SASTRA INGGRIS

## "SASTRA DAN LINGUISTIK"

DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF STEPHEN KING'S NOVEL, THE DARK TOWER: THE DRAWING OF THE THREE, IN THE CONTEXT OF RACISM AND ANTI-RACISM  
(Anton Sutandio)

CONCEPT OF AMERICAN DREAM IN THEODORE DREISER'S AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY  
(Maryani)

'RUN' IN THE BROWN CORPUS AND LONDON LUND CORPUS  
(Dedy Setiawan)

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN ENGLAND IN THE LATE 1920S AND EARLY 1930S AS SEEN IN G.B. SHAW'S THE APPLE CART  
(Trisnowati Tanto)

MIGRATION, IDENTITY AND THE ISSUE OF BRITISHNESS IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH MIGRANT TEXTS  
(Sandra Lilyana)

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# SASTRA INGGRIS

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# SASTRA INGGRIS

## DAFTAR ISI

- DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF STEPHEN KING'S NOVEL, THE DARK TOWER: THE DRAWING OF THE THREE, IN THE  
CONTEXT OF RACISM AND ANTI-RACISM 66-82  
(Anton Sutandio)
- CONCEPT OF AMERICAN DREAM IN THEODORE  
DREISER'S AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY 83-99  
(Maryani)
- 'RUN' IN THE BROWN CORPUS AND LONDON LUND  
CORPUS 100-113  
(Dedy Setiawan)
- THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN ENGLAND 114-124  
IN THE LATE 1920S AND EARLY 1930S AS SEEN  
IN G.B. SHAW'S THE APPLE CART  
(Trisnowati Tanto)
- MIGRATION, IDENTITY AND THE ISSUE OF BRITISHNESS 125-140  
IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH MIGRANT TEXTS  
(Sandra Lilyana)

Deconstructive Reading of Stephen King's Novel, The Dark Tower: The Drawing of the Three, in the Context of Racism and Anti-Racism  
(Anton Sutandio)

writer whose name and works have been known widely. His works have been translated into over 20 world languages. Besides writing novels, King writes short stories, film scripts, drama and non-fiction essays. Many of his works have been adapted into movies or television series.

Stephen J. Spignesi, a writer and literary critic, in his book, *Stephen King: American's Best-Loved Boogeyman*, says that Stephen King is, '...one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most prolific—and important—writers.' (Spignesi, 1997:x). Spignesi also compares King with other famous writers in the past, 'King is Poe, Twain, Dickens and Salinger of our time. Personally, I find King's work to be more accessible than Poe; more exciting than Twain; less long-winded than Dickens; and considerably more prolific than Salinger.' (Spignesi, 2001:10). King is also said to be '...the greatest writer of purely American fiction of his generation, comparing to such master as Mark Twain.' (Wiater, et.al. [ed.], 2001:xvii-xviii).

I believe that until today, racism is still one of the hottest issues in the world discussion. Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, sociologists, define racism in their book, *Key Concepts to Cultural Theory*, as '...a mode of classification of human beings which distinguishes between them on the basis of physical properties (e.g. skin colour, facial features) which purportedly derive from genetic inheritance.' (Edgar, 1999:323). Racism has always become part of human civilization. 'Racism is an entity of evil against humanity which exists throughout this world...The most hideous of such atrocities includes the genocide practices against indigenous people in America, Australia and Pacific Island, enslavement of Africa...Even at this very moment people continue to struggle with the impact of such inhumane conditions.' ([www.geocities.com/ru00ru00/racismhistory/](http://www.geocities.com/ru00ru00/racismhistory/)). The history of racism started with the division of human beings based on their races, as CLR James states in his book, *Modern Politics*, '...the conception of dividing people by race begins with its slave trade. Thus this (the slave trade) was so shocking, so opposed to all the conceptions of society which religion and philosophers had...the only justification by which humanity could face it was to divide people into races and decide that Africans were an inferior race.' (<http://www.geocities.com/Paris/2159/whyrace/html>).

One of the actual forms of racism is the negative stereotype of the black people. Stereotype is' ...*a fixed and simplified characterization that is constantly repeated to gain acceptance by mainstream audiences, usually 'marked' by exaggerated physical features and speech...Stereotype draws on one narrow aspect of a social type, amplify it and thoroughly invest a character with this characteristic.*' (www.bothell.washington.edu/faculty/mgoldberg/stereotype.htm.) This stereotype images are not only used to 'accommodate' the non-dominant social groups, but also '*...can be used to reaffirm mainstream ideology.*' (www.bothell.washington.edu/faculty/mgoldberg/stereotype.htm.)

The world of literature is one of the sites that have great influence in talking about racism. I will try to discuss this topic by applying deconstruction approach. By connecting ideology and racism, I will analyze how King, as a white popular novelist, speaks about this matter. In the novel chosen to be analyzed, the appearance of the black people is significant.

Besides the deconstruction approach, I will also relate the analysis to cultural studies, as this analysis cannot be separated from cultural matters, particularly related to ideology, representation and stereotype, in the context of white-black relationship.

Cultural studies were pioneered by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. The studies are the result of the postmodern thinking development, with interdisciplinary analysis as one of its characteristics. Cultural studies focus their analysis more on popular culture, which is also one of its characteristics. One important concept in cultural studies is ideology. Cultural studies basically try to reveal the role of ideology from its object of analysis, so it can be said that cultural studies are 'ideology studies'. James Carey, in his book *Communication As Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, supports this statement by saying that '*...cultural studies could be described as easily and perhaps more accurately as ideological studies*' (Carey, 1989:97).

In applying the ideology studies, I will focus the analysis on racism ideology. Ideology has many meanings, as what John Storey says in his book, *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, '*...ideology has many competing meanings.*' (Storey, 1993:3). Joel S.

Torstenson, a sociologist says '...*ideology of racism...served to justify the system of caste-like inequality.*' (<http://honors.org/AHR/religion.html>)

As a white popular novelist, King will try to accommodate and please all his readers from various backgrounds and races, without showing a tendency toward certain people or races. I will try to analyze the role of racism and anti-racism ideologies behind the representation of the black characters in his novel. The deconstruction approach will start at this point. I also apply sociology theory in the relation between the black and the white people as a reference to legitimate the description of the black characters in the novel.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### 1. Cultural Studies

The term cultural studies cannot be separated from the word 'culture', which is considered '*one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.*' (Williams, 1983:87). One of the definitions is '*the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic creativity*', which I choose as it is closely related to the object of analysis. From this definition, it can be concluded that all works of arts in any period of time are cultural products.

Cultural studies have a specific characteristic; they focus their analysis on popular works. Williams has some definitions on the word 'popular', and related to the word 'culture', they will create a complex combination. As the first step, popular culture can be defined as 'culture that is well-liked by many people.' Furthermore, I take the more specific definition of the phrase popular culture. "*Popular culture is articulated as a structured terrain of cultural exchange and negotiation [a compromise equilibrium] between forces of incorporation and resistance; a struggle between the attempt to universalize the interests of the dominant against the resistance of the subordinate.*" (Storey, 1993:121). This definition will later be related to the racism/anti-racism ideology that is applied in the novel analyzed.

The purpose of an analysis in cultural studies is not to ask the researcher to admit the differences between high culture, a culture that is considered to

have a better quality, and popular culture. Cultural studies require the researcher to identify the operations that happen within cultural practices, to identify how those practices keep on emphasizing the borderline between elite culture and popular culture, between the superior people versus the subordinate people, and also to identify what the popular culture has achieved in a specific context. The basic concept stated by Williams about cultural studies is his refusal to define 'culture' separately from social life, and this refusal furthermore distinguishes cultural studies from its main concepts such as identity and representation.

## 2. Ideology

Ideology is an important concept in cultural studies. Graeme Turner in his book, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, says that ideology is, "...the most important conceptual or category in cultural studies." The word 'ideology' has many competing meanings. One of the definitions refers to 'ideological forms', in which texts (television fiction, pop songs, novels, feature films, etc.) always present a particular image of the world.' This definition is chosen because this is exactly what the analysed novel tries to convey: image of the world, in this context: racial problems. The image that will appear in the novel analysed is a racial matter, particularly in the life of American people.

One of the basic understandings or characteristics of ideology is that it works on the unconscious level. As an example, if I refer to a text, then the text which is surely written by someone, will be 'ridden' by ideology, which will later unconsciously be absorbed by the readers. This is the meaning of ideology that works on the unconscious level. The importance of the ideology concept in cultural studies is (also) stated by Anthony Easthope in his book, *Literary into Cultural Studies*. He says "...as an expression of social power, ideology can be understood in terms of sociology of knowledge, that is, ideology always conforms to the interests of those from whom it comes so that what you think or say depends in part on who you are and where you are or when you are saying it." (Easthope, 1991:131). The importance is also related to the belief that culture is "a region of serious contest and conflict over meaning." (Agger:1992:9). The quotation explains that there will always be a conflict and struggle in giving the meanings of cultural products.

### 3. Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a critical approach that appeared in the post-structuralism period, around 1960s to early 1970s. Jacques Derrida, a French philosopher, first introduces this approach in his book, *Of Grammatology*. Derrida states that deconstructive reading '*...must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses...[It] attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight*' (Storey, 1993:88).

According to another theorist, Terry Eagleton, quoted by Peter Barry in his book, *Beginning Theory, An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, deconstruction '*...can be roughly defined as applied post-structuralism. It is often referred to as 'reading against the grain,' or 'reading the text against itself*' (Barry, 1995:70-71). Deconstruction can simply be defined as reading a text to find contradictions and other inconsistent aspects that appear within the text itself, not looking for text unity as the structuralists do. To make it clearer, deconstructive reading '*...uncovers the unconscious rather than the conscious dimension of the text, all the things which its overt textuality glosses over or fails to recognise*' (Barry, 1995:71). Deconstruction tries to reveal the 'unconscious' aspect of the text, or in other words, things which are not explicitly stated, and then to lift them up to surface.

Deconstruction can not be categorized as a theory, that is why there is no single fixed method to do deconstructive reading. However, in this paper, one method of deconstructive reading will be applied, that has been done by Peter Barry. The first thing he did is dividing the deconstructive process into three stages, the first is the verbal stage, followed by the textual stage and the last one is the linguistic stage. However, this does not mean that all the three stages have to be present in one analysis, because as mentioned above, there is no fixed method in doing deconstructive reading. In this paper, only verbal and textual stages are applied, as they are the most dominant stages in the novels.

The second step is to analyze each stage. In the verbal stage, the reading is focused on finding paradoxes and contradictions within the text. This internal contradictions indicate '*...endemic unreliability and slipperiness*



(of language)" (Barry, 1995:74). Furthermore, the reading is continued by finding text tendency in reversing binary oppositions. As a common example, day/night binary opposition that favors 'day', turns out to be the other way around. As a result, 'night' is favored over 'day'.

In the textual stage, the method moves to a wider context, compared to the verbal stage, which only focuses on individual phrases. This stage focuses more on the whole text. The critic is looking for shifts or breaks in the continuity of the text: *'...these shifts reveal instabilities of attitude, and hence the lack of a fixed and unified position. They can be of various kinds; they may be shifts in focus, shifts in time, or tone, or point of view, or attitude, or pace, or vocabulary...thus, they show paradox and contradiction on a larger scale than is the case with the first stage.'* (Barry, 1995: 75).

In the end, deconstructive reading *'...aims to produce disunity, to show that what had looked like unity and coherence actually contains contradictions and conflicts which the text cannot stabilise and contain.'* (Barry, 1995:77)

#### 4. Racism issue

According to Charles Jarret in his book, *Contemporary Racial and Ethnic Relation* (1995), there are two dominant concepts in the sociological thinking on relationship between races:

- a. Prejudice, hostile/unfriendly/stiff attitude toward a particular race group and its member.
- b. Assimilation, a process of social and cultural changes that happen when groups of minority race enter groups of majority race.

Joel S. Torstenson, an American sociologist, states that there are some major elements of racism that have become part of the belief system of white Americans:

- a. *Inequality of the races.* Human races basically have different bases of creation, based on the evolution levels.
- b. *Biological source of cultures.* Cultural and civilization development is the product of biological completeness of every race.

Deconstructive Reading of Stephen King's Novel, The Dark Tower: The Drawing of the Three, in the Context of Racism and Anti-Racism  
(Anton Sutandio)

- c. *White race = high culture.* The development of western civilization's high culture is the natural product of Anglo-Saxon race superiority. A non-white race can only produce low culture.
- d. *Non-white = low status roles.* With this belief, whose role in society is limited only to functions in low social status, and they have to be satisfied with the income in accordance with their status.
- e. *Race mixing = decay.* Mixture between two races is believed to reduce the cultural quality of the more dominant race.
- f. *Race purity is important.* For this reason, the purity of the white race has to be kept to maintain their domination

In reality, there is no theory or scientific explanation that supports the assumptions above. All the assumptions are considered social myths although there are still many people who believe them to be true.

Racism problems are always connected with the pressure inflicted by the majority on the minority. The definition of the word minority (subordinate), according to Louis Wirth, a sociologist, is "*a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.*" (Wirth, 1945:137).

There are several definitions of 'Racism', but I will refer to the definition by Charles Jarret, who says that racism is "*a blanket term for that which keeps a racial group in a 'subordinate or minority position'*". (Jarret, 1995:128). From this racism issue, the terms stereotype and representation that appear are related to the description of minority people. Discussion on representation cannot be separated from the term 'representatives' and 'represented'. Grazia states his definition on representation as "*...relation between two persons, the representative and the represented or constituent, with the representative holding the authority to perform various actions that incorporate the agreement of the represented.*" (Grazia, 1972:461). While stereotype is "*(a) classic view of a simple and basically inaccurate set of beliefs about what members of group or category are like, based on faulty reasoning or incomplete observation which is got hold with much assurance by many people.*" (Jarret, 1995:130).

Considering themselves a superior race, the whites with their power are able to 'slip' the racism ideology into literature. The purpose is of course to maintain their position and superiority. Unconsciously, the common readers also participate in it. This superior race then 'shapes' the stereotypes of other races, or it can be said that they 'label' minority races.

In many literary works of the mainstream that show the representation of minority people, the tendency is that the minority are described based on the stereotypes they shape. Negative representation is also experienced by the black people in the United States. In many aspects of life, their existence still cannot be fully accepted, including in the literary world.

## ANALYSIS

### 1. Synopsis and information on *The Dark Tower II: The Drawing of The Three*

*The Dark Tower II: The Drawing of The Three* is the sequel of *The Dark Tower I: Gunslinger*. It tells about the adventure of the last gunslinger, Roland of Gilead, in his quest to find the Dark Tower. The setting of this novel is in imaginary places. However, the world where the gunslinger lives can be connected with the world that we know through a time portal. In *Dark Tower II*, Roland uses the magic portal to enter our world and draw two persons from it. The people drawn are going to be the new generation of gunslingers who are replacing Roland's dead comrades. The first person drawn is Eddie Dean, a drug addict who lives in New York around 1980s. The second one is a black woman with amputated legs, Odetta Holmes, who lives in New York around 1960s. The third one is Sussanah, who is actually the same person, that is Odetta Holmes. Odetta has a double personality. The other personality is Detta Holmes. Sussanah is the combination of the two personalities.

The three of them face many obstacles to reach the Dark Tower; however, they have not reached it in this novel, as this novel is one of the six novels written about Roland.

## 2. Portrayal of Odetta/Detta/Sussanah Holmes in *The Dark Tower The Drawing of The Three*

Odetta Holmes is a woman with a double personality. This trait is not congenital, but it is caused by a racist who deliberately threw a brick on her head. Her amputated legs are also caused by the same person who pushed her in front of a moving underground train.

Odetta Holmes lives in New York, and if we look at the history from the time the civil war broke out, New York is one of the states that are against slavery. Although slavery is forbidden, it does not mean that everyone is anti-racism. Odetta is represented as a rich person who has inherited a lot from her father, a famous dentist. The quotation below shows how Odetta lives in luxury, and if we refer to the binary opposition working in the quotation, I will get black/white binary opposition, or black is favored to white. The representation of a black character that first appears in this novel is a black unmarried wealthy woman who lives in an elite neighborhood. This representation indirectly brings anti-racism ideology, which says that not all blacks are poor and have low social status in society. The quotation below shows the omniscient point of view, describing Odetta's condition,

*So the two of them rode in unaccustomed silence to the gray Victorian block of apartments on the corner of Fifth and Central Park South, a very exclusive gray Victorian block of apartments, and she supposed that made her a blockbuster, and she knew there were people in those poshy-poshy flats who would not speak to her unless they absolutely had to, and she didn't really care. Besides, she was above them, and they knew she was above them. It had occurred to her on more than one occasion that it must have galled some of them mightily, knowing there was nigger living in the penthouse apartment of this fine staid old building where once the only black hands allowed had been clad in white gloves or perhaps the thin black leather ones of a chauffeur.*

(King, 1987:217-218)

Referring to the verbal stage, the black/white binary opposition in the quotation above does not work consistently all the time. At the same time, the opposite binary opposition also appears. The black/white is negated by a sentence that weakens the position of the blacks, especially Odetta. I notice the contradiction of the binary opposition in the last sentence. The sentence implicitly shows the 'lowering' of the blacks' position. It is mentioned that in the past, the blacks who lived there were only housekeepers, gardeners, or drivers. The existence of a black person as the owner of the house is considered odd and unacceptable. This sentence implicitly shows that the whites' position should always be higher than the blacks', no matter how rich or poor they are. Besides that, there is also a negative representation of the blacks, related to their position in society. They are described as subordinates. This certainly is contradictory to the early representation that their position (through Odetta) is higher than the whites'. As a comparison to the first representation, that is a rich young unmarried black woman, appears the 'competing' representation, that is in the past, black people who could live in that neighborhood were gardeners, housekeepers or drivers, who are all considered to have 'low status jobs'. If that the appearance of the negative representation wants to remind their previous position, which indirectly weakens the early positive representation. At the same time, the negative representation is also weakened by the early positive representation. From this short analysis, I notice that there is textual inconsistency in the quotation above. Both negative and positive representations appear at the same time.

Another inconsistency is found in the quotation below, through two contradictory statements about Odetta's representation as a rich black. The quotation is seen from Andrew's perspective. He is Odetta's driver, and this quotation shows what is in his mind.

*It wasn't just that she was a woman; she was a nigger, an uppity northern nigger messing where she had no business messing, and they probably figured a woman like that deserved just what she got. Thing was, she was also a rich nigger...Thing was, she was almost as well-known to the American public as Medgar Evers or Martin Luther King. Thing was, she'd gotten her rich nigger face on the cover.*

(King, 1987:222).

Deconstructive Reading of Stephen King's Novel, The Dark Tower: The Drawing of the Three, in the Context of Racism and Anti-Racism  
(Anton Sutandio)

From the three sentences above, the first two sentences implicitly show a negative representation of Odetta. Odetta is now represented as a 'woman', and pragmatically, it has gender bias, since in the quotation above it is said, "*It wasn't just that she was a woman...*" It can be drawn from the sentence that a rich black person is something almost impossible to exist, let alone a rich black woman. Besides that, the use of the word 'nigger' is an offence if it is used to refer to a black person. The first sentence says that Odetta is (a) "...*nigger messing where she had no business messing*". Implicitly, this quotation emphasizes that the elite surrounding are not suitable for a black person, although she is rich. The phrase "*rich nigger*", also wants to suggest that this is something uncommon, that it is almost impossible to find a rich black person, and if there is any, it is very rare. The word "*rich*" above in the novel is typed in *italics*, as if to emphasize that this fact is unacceptable for the whites, and the word is used as a mockery. Actually, if we refer to someone rich, black or white, we just say "*rich person/man/woman*", but since racism ideology operates in the quotation, what appears is antipathy toward the existence of a rich black person. On the other hand, there is also a positive representation of Odetta, shown through the narrator's confession. Although implicitly Andrew does not feel comfortable with Odetta's existence, explicitly he admits that Odetta is a rich black woman, famous, and has an important position in society. Odetta's fame is considered to be the same as some other non-fiction black figures such as Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King. The appearance of these two names implicitly shows that anti-racism also operates in the quotation. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the quotation is inconsistent in carrying the meaning of Odetta's portrayal, related to racism and anti-racism context. This inconsistency is relevant to the basic idea of deconstruction, that is to 'shake' the conventional belief of 'fixed' meaning.

The instability of the text in representing rich Odetta keeps on appearing in other quotations, as can be seen in the next quotation, which shows 'the other side' of Odetta, that is Detta, who is a kleptomaniac, "...*it was not panties but a rayon scarf, and she was casually slipping it into her purse as she walked along a counter in the Nice Notions section of Macy's—a scarf which sold at that time for \$1.99. Cheap. Cheap like the white nylon panties. Cheap. Like her*" (King, 1987:227). The narrator above is the novelist, who gives some information about Odetta's 'other side'. The quotation implicitly negates Odetta's existence of being rich and famous.

From the sentence, it can be seen that racism ideology indirectly operates in it, as if it were 'unwilling' to see a positive representation of the black people. As a result, the positive representation is countered with another representation, in this context by the appearance of Detta, a kleptomaniac black woman. The use of the word "*cheap*" really lowers Odetta. Odetta is compared to cheap nylon underpants. There is clearly an ambiguity in Odetta's representation, between a rich, educated and famous black woman and a kleptomaniac, embarrassing black woman. A contradictive representation that appears from one black character causes trouble in explaining the character. "*She is two women in the same body. She was one woman when I entered her, and another when I returned here*" (King, 1987:281).

Another inconsistency of Odetta's representation appears in the next quotation, which again shows Odetta's dark side, Detta, as a woman with a bad habit and a rough way of speaking. However, at the same time, Odetta also appears in the quotation, representing an educated, softly speaking woman. This quotation appears when Odetta is on her way to a hospital in an ambulance, after she is pushed over a platform in an underground train station. In her critical condition, two contradictive characters appear together one after the other. Detta's characteristic really shows the black people stereotypes, particularly through her way of speaking, with a strong special black accent. On the other hand, Odetta's characteristic is described to be very polite, with a soft and educated language.

*'Dey get dat honkey mahfah?'*

*'No,' George said, ... 'Good. Honky fuzz jus be lettin him off anyway. I ge gittin him. I be cuttin his cock off. Sumbitch! I tell you what I goan do t'dat sumbitch! I tell you one thing, you sumbitch honky! I goan tell you...tell...'*

*Her eyes fluttered again and George had thought Yes, go to sleep, please go to sleep, I don't get paid for this, I don't understand this, they told us about shock but nobody mentioned schizphrenia as one of the—*

*'What sort of accident was it?' she asked. 'I remember coming out of the I—'*

*'Eye?' he said stupidly.*

*She smiled a little. It was a painful smile. 'The Hungry I. It's a coffee house.'*

...  
*'Have I lost my legs?'*  
*George tried to swallow and couldn't. There seemed to be nothing in his throat to grease the machinery.*  
*'Not all of them,' he said inanely, and her eyes closed. Let it be a faint, he thought then, please let it be a f—*  
*They opened, blazing. One hand came up and slashed five slits through the air within an inch of his face—any closer and he would have been in the E.R. getting his cheek stitched up instead of smoking Chesties with Julio Estavez.*  
*'YOU AIN'T NUTHIN BUT A BUNCHA HONKY SONSA BITCHES!' she screamed. Her face was monstrous, her eyes full of hell's own light. It wasn't even the face of a human being. 'GOAN KILL EVERY MAHFAHIN HONKY I SEE! GOAN GELD EM FUST! GOAN CUT OFF THEIR BALLS AND SPIT EM IN THEY FACES! GOAN—'*  
(King, 1987:252-252)

The appearance of the two contradictive personalities above shows the ultimate consistency of the text in Odetta's representation in the novel. The quotation becomes contradictive toward itself. It is difficult to determine which representation is dominant, since both appear at the same time and negate each other, again and again.

## CONCLUSION

Having done the deconstructive reading on the novel, I arrive at the conclusion that the representation of the black female character is inconsistent. This inconsistency can be seen from how the racism and anti-racism ideologies operate together, one after the other, in giving the meaning to the black character. Consequently, it is difficult to determine which representation is more dominant. The ideology operates on the



unconscious level, so it is unlikely that the novelist himself intentionally brings out the racism or anti-racism ideology. However, after doing the analysis, I found that racism ideology plays a more dominant role in the novel. I assume that racism ideology, which appears to be more dominant, occurs to show the real events that happened during that era, and of course consequently, racism has to be brought up to make it more realistic. On the other side, I also notice another attitude of the novelist toward the racism issue. In my opinion, the novelist's attitude is that he is not a racist, as can be seen in how he shows the anti-racism ideology in the black character's representation. Moreover, the black character is portrayed as a victim of racial action, thus it raises sympathy from the readers.

By doing deconstructive reading, I conclude that this novel does not show unity, especially related to the racism and anti-racism ideologies in representing the black female character. I want to refer to Derrida's statement about 'text', that, '*No text exists in isolation. Instead all texts are part of the intertextual system...*' (Booker, 1996:64). This statement is mirrored in the deconstructive reading above. It shows that there is no text that can stand by itself. Every text is related to other texts, so it is almost impossible to get a fixed meaning of a text, for '*Meaning is always elusive...*' (Agger, 1992:100).

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